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ABSTRACT

The Farmers' Alliance was organized in Texas in 1877, and soon spread through the South and Midwest. Farmers formed cooperatives to combat the crop-lien system that bound them to furnishing merchants and to oppose differential railroad rates that hampered the shipment of their crops. As it grew, the alliance began to demand other land, transportation, and monetary reforms that ultimately became part of the political framework of the Populist Party. To determine the role of the alliance press as a propaganda arm of the movement and as an integral communication and educational network of the alliance, a study was made of two Texas newspapers--the "Jacksboro Rural Citizen" and the "Dallas Morning News." The two papers represented two different styles of journalism and two points of view in a society under social and political tension. The "News" was a developing business institution in a modernizing journalistic world, while the "Citizen" was a small, rural paper dedicated to the farmers' movement. They represented different styles of business enterprise, served different audiences, and defined news and the public interest from different perspectives. By the end of 1886, however, the two papers had reached a similar conclusion: that the Farmers' Alliance should remain a nonpolitical body and that it should not affiliate with striking laborers. (FL)

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Newspaper Portrayals of Agrarian Reform
The Jacksboro Rural Citizen and The Dallas Morning News

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ABSTRACT

This paper represents a preliminary excursion into the world of the Farmers' Alliance press, and into the established press which derided the farmers' organization. This study of two newspapers--the Jacksboro Rural Citizen and The Dallas Morning News--is an attempt to determine the role of the Alliance press as a propaganda arm to promote the political aims of the party, and as an integral communication and educational network for the Farmers' Alliance.

The Citizen and the News represented two styles of journalism and two points of view in a society under social and political tension. The News, an outgrowth of the oldest daily in Texas, the Galveston Morning News, was a developing business institution in a modernizing journalistic world. The Citizen was a small, rural paper dedicated to the farmers' movement. They represented different styles of business enterprise, served different audiences, and defined news and the public interest from different perspectives. By the end of 1886, however, they reached similar conclusions--that the Farmers' Alliance should remain a non-political body and that it should not affiliate with striking laborers. Despite that similarity the two newspapers assigned different levels of legitimacy to agrarian activists, the Rural Citizen viewing labor affiliation as detrimental to the Alliance organization itself, and the News labeling the farmers as politically naive and ineffectual.

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Newspaper Portrayals of Agrarian Reform:
The Jacksboro Rural-Citizen and The Dallas Morning News

On Oct. 18, 1885, The Dallas Morning News reported that a group of farmers was forming an Alliance at the Oak Lawn Schoolhouse. The reporter commented that the ladies who drove to the meeting with their husbands were "attired a la mode." Their apparent culture and style of dress, he said, were "evidence of a happy and prosperous community." Where such prosperity existed in rural districts, there also could be found the "maximum of the true and morally good."[1]

Less than a year later, in August of 1886, a reporter for the same newspaper warned against "dark-lantern political bodies" and described a group of farmers who had gathered at Cleburne, Texas, to organize politically, as presenting quite a "grangey" appearance.[2]

In July of 1885, at the same time the News reporter was commenting on the well-dressed farmers' wives, the Jacksboro Rural Citizen printed a letter from a farm wife in Denton County. "Brothers and sisters," she said, "let us do every thing [sic] in our power to bring about a feeling of equality, and brotherly love, in this part of the community, and may we live as one family. . . ."[3] A year later, when the "grangey" farmers met at Cleburne, the Rural Citizen relinquished its role as the official Alliance journal to the Dallas Southern Mercury. The Citizen was the victim of editorial opinion, the editor having cast his ballot with the losing side in the debate over whether the Alliance would support the Knights of Labor and whether it would abandon its non-political stance.[4]

The difference in the two accounts reported by the News and the contrast in tone between the News and the Citizen reflected not only a variety of changes in society and fear of change in the structure of Texas politics, but also represented changes in the journalistic world. The Rural Citizen developed not as an

institutionalized organization in a modernizing journalistic world, but as a vehicle which attempted to build a sense of community among Texas farmers who were striving to achieve more control over their own political and economic lives. The Dallas News, on the other hand, was one of the first experiments in chain or corporate journalism. It subscribed to modern tenets of professional journalism and identified with the business community of Dallas.

The Farmers' Alliance was first organized in Lampasas County, Texas, in 1877. The organization spread throughout Texas, then through other Southern states. Similar organizations developed throughout the Midwest, with Kansas as a key state. Farmers formed cooperatives to combat the crop-lien system which bound southern farmers to the furnishing merchant; in the Midwest the emphasis was on eliminating differential railway rates which hampered the shipment of crops. Other land, transportation and monetary reforms soon were demanded by the Alliances, and these reform ideas ultimately became part of the political framework of the Populist Party.[5]

The causes of agrarian discontent and the subsequent development of the Farmers' Alliance and the Populist Party have been treated thoroughly in the historical literature.[6] Most recently Lawrence Goodwyn has treated the development of the Populist Party as a cultural experience, analyzing the building of a community and the forming of an identity among the farmers who made up the Alliances and the People's Party. It was he who suggested that the Populist press should be examined in regard to the role it assumed in building that community.[7]

This paper represents a preliminary excursion into the world of the

Alliance press, and into the established press which derided the farmers' organization. This is a study of two newspapers--the Jacksboro Rural-Citizen, the first official Alliance organ, and the Dallas News, an outgrowth of the state's oldest daily, the Galveston News.[8] This initial examination of the Alliance press is an attempt to determine its role as a propaganda arm to promote the political aims of the party, and as an integral communication and educational network for the Farmers' Alliance. Was the reform press essential in educating farmers in the politics and techniques of agrarian reform? Did it fill an information gap left by the established press? These questions are significant in determining whether mass media lend support to a true diversity of opinion and information or whether they promote one or more positions dominated by one or several particular ideologies.

The press underwent major changes from 1830 to 1900. By the time of the Civil War, both rapid technological developments and an increase in literacy in the United States had affected circulation and format. Both the rotary press, which greatly increased production speed, and the telegraph, which fostered cooperative news gathering, expanded circulation and newspaper size. The development of chain ownership and cooperative news ventures tended to standardize content and decrease diversity. Because the middle class was affluent and advertisers catered to that affluence, the media also directed themselves to the middle class. In so doing, working class people, laborers, the poor, ethnic groups and farmers became peripheral audiences of the major newspapers, despite the claims of presenting news for a mass audience.[9] The "new journalism" of the 1880s began to develop a set of standards for itself. The news function , in addition to opinion, became a primary obligation. Editors prided themselves on editorial freedom, crusaded actively in what they defined as

the public interest, and experimented with new make-up styles, headlines and illustrations designed to attract a mass audience.[10]

Newspapers claimed a growing independence of newspapers from partisan control during the last half of the 19th century.[11] However, while decreasing party solidarity may have been a fact in urban areas, local editors maintained concrete party identities at least until a decade into the 20th Century. With few exceptions, if they were not candidates for election, they at least were involved in precinct level caucusing. Often newspaper claims to independence reflected the idea that an editor could criticize the party, but rarely did it mean that an editor would sacrifice party loyalty.[12] This involvement is significant, particularly when the dominant Republican and Democratic character of the editors is considered. If the press acts as a vehicle for enforcing social norms, did Republican and Democratic editors view Alliance tenets as being within the social norm, or did they treat it as aberrant? If they treated the movement as aberrant, would Populism have received consideration as a serious reform movement? Recent political communication research indicated that "impartiality and objectivity. . . stop at the point where political consensus itself ends--and the more radical the dissent, the less impartial and objective the media."[13] Pamela J. Shoemaker noted that media may depict a group as deviant by picturing it as making "single grievances with which a system can deal without altering its fundamental social relations." Such a picture negates a group's efforts to present a cohesive opposition to a current structure. The media "also may determine which events are legitimate news events," and report statements by authoritative figures who may also perceive a

group as deviant. These approaches often make a group seem "eccentric and not to be taken seriously."[14]

The reform press has been neglected both because of its transitory nature and because of the tendency of journalism historians to assume an underlying progressive interpretation of journalism history. Editors of the reform press have been categorized as nonprofessional, and described as being devoted to political causes rather than to journalism. These editors did not fit the common historical conception that the press represented a "linear advance of liberalism" in conflict with reactionary interests. Such a view has caused journalism history to focus on "great men" who were viewed as advancing the cause of "good vs. evil" and "democracy vs. totalitarianism."[15] Missing from this framework, however, is an understanding of "how the press has fostered and/or conveyed to society the dominant conservative ideas which run throughout the nation's history."[16]

To counteract the progressive interpretation, Marion Marzolf called for a development of a cultural history which would study press content as a "reflection of the cultural values of a period . . . and the role of media in circulating ideas to the general public."[17] Furthering the concept of a cultural history, John Stevens and Hazel Dicken Garcia discussed the lack of a conceptual model for journalism history and pointed to the cultural-historical models developed by historians Gene Wise and Robert Berkhofer. Garcia suggested a model for looking at the past "not as a series of static frames, but as a continous process" which would involve searching for "interactive complexities."[18]

The thesis of this paper that the Rural-Citizen existed to inform its members about the activities of the Alliance and to form a sense of community among Alliance members. Further, the Citizen functioned

as a forum for debating the political and economic choices of the Alliance, and therefore was not a propaganda organ designed merely to promote the aims of the organization. The evidence also indicates that the Dallas News, in its effort to modernize, and in its effort to serve an audience of which it was a part--the local business community--derided the farmers and depicted them as being politically naive and unbusinesslike. The News reacted in a way similar to that of the local merchants and politicians. The publishers disliked the farmers' attempt to compete with local merchants through cooperative buying and selling and they resented the farmers' attempt to gain political control within the Democratic Party. But most of all, the publishers reacted against the farmers who when they affiliated with the Knights of Labor, aligned themselves with labor and challenged local business control. The press function, therefore, was influenced not only by modern journalistic influences, but also by the society of which it was a part.

The Rural Citizen, edited by J.N. Rogers, championed the Alliance cause in its first issue of September 24, 1880. This rural newspaper, printed during its first few months at the owner's farm, continued as an Alliance organ through June of 1886, when it changed its name to the Jacksboro Gazette.[19] As the Gazette, it provided information on crop production and other rural issues, but the Alliance no longer assumed any more space in the newspaper than did "Temperance Gossip."

Rogers' statement of journalistic principles in the first issue indicated that he was more than a mere reformer with no knowledge of journalism. He said he would not accept free advertising disguised as editorial matter. "Omit anything like the 'puff' of one's business,

whether it be politics, merchandising or anything that advances the pecuniary or political interests of anyone," Rogers said. He further noted that an author's name must accompany every submission.[20]

Throughout the years of the newspaper's existence basic information played an important role in regard to Alliance news as well as national news. One function of the newspaper was to tell farmers when Alliances would meet, what would be discussed and who would speak. One writer told the editor about the organization of two Alliances, saying "I hope you will give notice of this . . . that they may be able to meet with them in the next County Alliance."[21] Concerning national news, Rogers said the newspaper would give "full and impartial" news and opinions of different parties, and the newspaper had even secured a "Washington correspondent."[22] The newspaper brought to the people news from national organs that supported Greenback and other reform principles, and it printed the platforms of the Democratic and Republican parties.[23] Alliance members relied on Rogers for opinion as well. "Give us a digested thought on joint stock companies and corporative bodies," a Denton County resident asked.[24]

Rogers continually tried to upgrade the newspaper, and within a year of the first issue, he had purchased a new power press and new type and enlarged the newspaper. "We also propose to give its literary, news, and general intelligence, a corresponding increase of value," he said. A "newspaper of the first class must be under the direction of some one mind," he said, but he encouraged correspondents in all neighborhoods.[25]

The audience of the Citizen was rural, with reports discussing crop diversification, planting, and harvesting.[26] "We need articles giving the experience of our farmers and stockmen in this and adjoining counties on stock raising and the cultivation of various

crops," the editor wrote.[27] The Rural Citizen believed that "Scientific farming will pay."[28] A minimum of town news made its way into the paper, although occasionally comments about buying products from local merchants or supporting railroad development surfaced.[29]

But the role of the Citizen was not strictly informational, nor did the newspaper return to the past by imitating a strict party press. Rather, it assumed the role of trying to build a sense of community among farmers who were attempting to gain more control over their economic situation. Linda Steiner analyzed the role of the newspaper in "building, identifying, legitimizing and sustaining the suffrage community," and James and Sharon Murphy have examined the importance of the newspaper to the development of an identity for the American Indian.[30] Steiner noted that "despite their initial reluctance, suffragists quickly realized, as have other social and reform groups, the centrality of communications in advocating their interests and sustaining the members' sense of communality and identification." She also noted that suffrage papers were not only communication to women, but of women. She defined the community they built as an "acknowledgement of common goals and shared interests, participation in cooperative activity, self-conscious emphasis on loyalty and commitment."[31]

Similar community-building activity was actively promoted by the Rural-Citizen. One writer said he hoped the paper would exist to tell people that the Alliance "is a living institution."[32] Rogers tried to create a forum in the newspaper by printing not only the platforms of the Alliance, but by dedicating one page to correspondence among members of the various Alliances, particularly those in West Texas. Occasionally the writer was the president or secretary of a local

Alliance, or even the president of the State Alliance, but that position was not a prerequisite for gaining space in the newspaper.[33] The idea was one of communication among people, not communication to a group of a people.

From 1880 through 1885, several themes run throughout the issues of the Citizen. The newspaper promoted the idea that farmers could not achieve their goals if they did not band together, solve internal disputes and support each other.[34] Education was promoted as a tool needed to preserve the freedom they had been granted by their forefathers and to preserve their farms for their children.[35] In 1883 an Alliance member wrote that "farmers as a class must be freely qualified to fill any position or office in life before their occupation will command the respect of the world at large."[36] Another report reprinted from the Mineral Wells Sun said the farmer still learned too slowly. "He still clings to the old fogy idea that education is not needed by a farmer." The writer continued, "The farmer of the future will be an educated man."[37]

Another area of emphasis was organizational activity, both for the purpose of improving farming methods as well as fighting monopolies. The motto was "unity in things essential, and in all things charity."[38] In January, 1884 the Citizen invited farmers to come to the State Alliance meeting at Chico to "give their views and discuss the different modes of cultivating the various crops. . . ."[39] The report of the Chico meeting noted that S.O. Daws, Alliance lecturer, had given "a stirring lecture on the condition of American farmers as a class and their duties as American citizens . . . to stand as a great conservative body against the encroachments of monopolies and in opposition to the growing corruptions of wealth and power as exhibited in the present day and age."[40]

A defensive tone began to creep into the newspaper in April 1884, with the editor emphasizing the non-political aspects of the Alliance.[41] In late October, 1885, a note taken from the Antelope Clipper said the Alliance purely commercial. "That (the political approach) was the rock upon which the Grange stranded."[42]

Also included in the newspaper during 1884 and 1885 was news about the formation of cotton yards, unification with other labor groups, and cooperative activities.[43] But there was much dissension in deciding how far the Alliance would go in allying with labor. In August, 1885, "Goose Quill" of Montague County wrote "While we are anxious that all the laboring class should join us, we should be careful that none unworthy, should pass the portals of the Alliance, we want no idlers in this work, and if we find that there are drones in the hive, let us root them out. . . ."[44]

It was also in August, 1885, that the first comments about merchant opposition surfaced. J.B. French of the Raleigh Alliance said "We have had to contend with hard times and merchants, notwithstanding, we now have a membership of forty."[45]

In early 1886 political discussions increased. In February, the Citizen printed comment from Joe Gibson of Ennis, who said "it is compatible with and most assuredly the duty of the Alliance to bring forth from her ranks men to fill places of trust in our government. . . . and yet we are told that it won't do for the farmer to dabble in politics, Oh, no." He said farmers were told that politics were rotten and would destroy the movement, but "who did the rottening?" he asked. "Instead of the conservative farmer falling in line with designing leaders . . . . every loyal citizen should guard with sacred fidelity his home and country from the usurpation of the common enemy, by closely studying our political

economy."[46] Gibson said the Alliance should support political candidates because "She has a common interest. The interest of the humblest member is identical with that of the whole brotherhood. Hence the practicability of a united effort on the part of the Alliance."[47]

In March, Rogers, in an editorial, "Alliance and Politics," said "it will be a sad day's work for the order when they bring politics within its bounds."[48] His comments reflected new political tensions within the state and dissension among the farmers about how to respond. Before the first of the year the Knights of Labor initiated a boycott of the Mallory Steam Ship Line in Galveston, and in February, 1886, after an employee was fired for attending a union meeting, they organized the Great Southwest Railway Strike. The Knights urged the Alliance to join the boycotts and support the strike, and some Alliances had voted their support.[49] Rogers firmly stated his opposition to boycotting, saying that such activity was "striking at the fundamental principles of American liberty. It is putting burdens on the farmers that they are not able to bear. It is tyrany [sic]."[50] However, Rogers continued to print diverse opinions, including the views of the radical William Lamb and the more conservative Daws.[51] In April, Rogers expressed concern that supporting a strike by laborers would not benefit, but hurt the farmer because prices would go up and the farmer would bear the brunt of increased wages.[52] In late April, he again decried the "lawless mobs" who were striking "at the expense of laborers and people of small capital and at a sacrifice of law and order."[53] Unity and harmony clearly were not the order of the day, and the Bowie Alliance discontinued its subscription to the Rural Citizen after the editor accused it of supporting "mob rule."[54] The columns of the next few

issues were filled with reports from the various Alliances, indicating either support or rejection of the boycott and strike.[55]

The Rural Citizen changed its name to the Jacksboro Gazette in July, 1886. While Alliance news was still carried to some small degree, the inside page of exchanges was dropped. On August 12, 1886 it compiled a report from the Ft. Worth Gazette about the meeting of the Grand State Alliance at Cleburne, noting the series of resolutions that were passed and that those meetings were held in secret and without press coverage.[56]

Some members of the Alliance were not happy about the loss of the Citizen as the major Alliance newspaper. The community-building efforts of the newspaper had earned the loyalty of many members who supported Rogers' political position. In early 1886 when political discussions intensified, a member from Brown County cautioned his brethren against supporting too many Alliance newspapers. "If one paper does its duty, one is enough."[57] The publisher answered that he thought it would be better if the Alliances formed a co-operative publishing company and the Alliance in every county and in the state support that one paper. "By so doing, a good paper can be supported and will prosper, and good be done for the Order."[58] A resident of McLennan County noted that the Citizen had stood by the Alliance when it "was in its infancy . . . when it was not a convenient stepping stone to popularity to advocate" Alliance principles. The writer said now that "other papers are willing to advocate the cause when it has grown strong enough to stand without their help, shall we turn from the paper that has helped to make the Alliance what it is now, and give our support to others who have no such claim."[59]

The Dallas Morning News represented a tradition dramatically different from that of the Rural-Citizen. It was an outgrowth of the Galveston News

established in 1842. By 1878 the Galveston News was circulated in Houston, and a web-perfecting press which produced 12,000 papers an hour had been installed. The Galveston News intensified its coverage of the state, adding to its offices in Austin and Houston ones in San Antonio, Dallas, Fort Worth and Waco. The partnership which had governed the Galveston News since 1876 was converted into a joint stock company under a state charter.[60] The Galveston News moved toward the impersonal journalism of the 1880s, declaring that the newspaper, not its editor, must now be a distinct personality.[61] "A great newspaper," the Galveston News said, "must be serenely indifferent to personal likes and dislikes . . . which would interfere with its functions as a faithful collector and disseminator of news."[62] The newspaper would attempt to become an intelligent voice and "a reasoning conscience."[63] The Galveston News also claimed that a great newspaper was "the work of a vast ramification of costly agencies and services, held in coordination and maintained in cooperation by a system as highly organized and as vigorously administered as that of a regular army equipped and thoroughly disciplined."[64]

The publishers of the Galveston News recognized that Dallas was a growing city, and they decided to extend their influence by establishing a newspaper in Dallas. From this background The Dallas Morning News emerged Oct. 1, 1885. Dallas, then a city of about 10,000 people, welcomed the new paper.[65] A Dallas spokesman offered to raise $25,000 in subscriptions to stock in the News corporation, and a prominent Dallas banker, attorney and cattle king built a $10,000 brick structure and leased it to the News. Because the existing Dallas Herald controlled the local franchise of the Western Associated Press, the News contracted with United Press for national wire coverage. The News employed twelve men in the business department, and thirty-one men in composing.[66] The News represented one of

the first examples of chain journalism in the United States and still claims to be "the oldest business institution in Texas."[67] In contrast to the Rural-Citizen's use of a free-lance correspondent in Washington and its exchange among individuals, the News employed reporters, used the interviewing technique that was gaining popularity, printed exchanges from other newspapers throughout the state, and contracted with a wire service for national news.

The first issue of the News proclaimed that it would "serve the public in the office of an honest, diligent and faithful newspaper."[68] How to achieve honesty was not considered a problem, for as the News stated in an 1886 issue during the Knights of Labor controversy, "The News, in common with all advanced representatives of thought, does not intentionally and, in this intelligent age, how could it inadvertently, stray from the path marked out by justice."[69] However, its policy statement in the first issue did assume a point of view, reflecting hesitation in interfering with an evolutionary development of reform and progress: "The antecedents and traditions of the paper commit it to the cause of reform and progress, but also to an uncompromising conservatism on the fundamental point of law and order as absolutely indispensable, alike, to liberty and security, to all true reform, and to all wholesome progress."[70] It noted that at times the best approach to "persistent evils" in "politics, in public affairs, in society, in industrial and business arrangements" was "philosophic resignation." The newspaper's role in such a case, the News argued, "is to inculcate such resignation--not to excite vain and vexatious strife for impossibilities."[71]

The News adhered to this philosophy in 1886 when it opposed the

Knights of Labor in their effort to intervene in railroad administration. The News claimed to be objective, emphasizing it was printed neither in the interest of labor or of capital, for "When a public journal of current news and opinions becomes a lickspittle, the public will understand and repudiate it."[72] The News did not view its policy of laissez-faire as subjective, but as the only course. The News claimed it would never encroach on "unadulterated freedom," but that "It is a simple right that rests with every man to say whether or not he will join a boycott or quit work, and no man has a right . . . to make his fellow man do one or both. THE NEWS is the organ of personal liberty."[73]

Early issues of The Dallas Morning News commented on the commercial aspects of the Farmers' Alliances. Much of this news was included in reprints from other newspapers. From Corsicana, a report indicated the Alliance "was an organization of considerable magnitude in this county," and noted that "the success of the organization will be determined by the success of those (cotton) sales."[74] The Corsicana correspondent said some individuals were having better luck than the Alliance in negotiating the prices they wanted. "Doubtless," he predicted, many "will bolt the Alliance and make individual sales tomorrow."[75] Members did not bolt, however, and cotton sales continued to be news.[76] A "Special to the News" said the Alliance in Tarrant County was not united and "not approved of by many of the farmers."[77] But the Cleburne newspaper reported that Alliance members were pleased with the results of combination.[78]

Fears of encroachment on local merchants also were reported. "Some little inconvenience has been caused the merchants for want of facilities to handle and ship such large lots," one writer said.[79] In 1886 another reporter commented that "If Alliance unions prove

effectual this concentration of trade will certainly injure the business of Rockwell County commercial men."[80]

In 1885 other news of the Alliance was limited. An announcement of a quarterly convention of the Tarrant County Alliance (Ft. Worth) appeared October 17 and a few days later an account noted that a Mr. W.E. Farmer would speak to the Alliance about "wage workers and mechanics of the county."[81] Farmer was a member of the Knights of Labor.[82]

Political tension and labor activity was intensifying in Texas, and neither the News nor the Alliances were immune from those issues. In October, 1885, the News reported that the Alliance was interested strictly in financial affairs and was not a political body.[83] The secretary of the Dallas County Alliance, who was interviewed in November, emphasized that the "best class of farmers and most intelligent" were joining and making "their influence felt." He conceded the Alliance went further than the Grange movement by taking into its ranks working men as well as farmers. "We are looking to the amalgamation of both. It will be necessary for complete success to have the co-operation [sic] of the Grangers and the Knights." However, the Alliance was not abandoning "Democratic principles." He then complimented the News, saying "Our members are much pleased with the manner in which you have advocated our cause. You have stood on the principle of right, and I trust they will show their appreciation of the same by having your paper a daily or weekly visitor to their homes."[84]

The News did not criticize the Alliances as long as the farmers did not challenge the contemporary political and economic structure. While it

did not editorialize about the farmers' organizations until 1886, in November of 1885 it printed a state exchange from the Mt. Pleasant News that indicated an existing controversy. This account argued that farmers' organizations had a right to exist, just as those of bankers, merchants, and day laborers. The account said if the farmers stayed within the bounds of what "is most conducive to their advancement and properity [sic], much good will be accomplished." The editor admonished, "Let both the consumer and producer keep within their legitimate channels, then neither will clash with the other, but both will harmonize."[85]

As the primary campaign for governor got underway in January of 1886, the News editorialized against political activity of the Alliance. Noting that the Alliance might decide, along with the Grangers and the Prohibitionists, to put candidates in the field, the News sarcastically commented, "But all these parties can start candidates of their own, or they may enter a pool and put forth a joint stock combination ticket, picturesque for its irregularity, its miscellaneousness and its leopardian platform."[86] The News argued that the Democratic party was the only party of "rational and consistent coherency" in the State.[87]

But in addition to politics and merchant opposition, the third factor which earned the Farmers' Alliance the opposition of the News was the affiliation with the Knights of Labor. News editors quoted Alliance officials who cautioned farmers against supporting boycotts, commented on the lawlessness of striking and the rights of private property, and tried to persuade farmers that allying with the Knights of Labor was not in their best interest.[88] In February of 1886, included with general news of the Great Railway Strike, the News printed the comment of the secretary of the Dallas Alliance, James T. Vanston, saying that "every member of the Farmers' Alliance is very

much grieved and hurt to find that their organization is to be dragged into the boycotting system now in force among the different assemblies of the Knights of Labor."[89] The News also quoted James Knox, editor of the Mesquiter and a county lecturer for the Alliance. Knox said the Alliance recognized that sometimes boycotting was essential, but that "it should be left largely to individual discretion." He noted that if the majority voted to boycott, that compelled only those who voted to go along with the action, not those who had opposed the boycott in the first place.[90] The News continued to print notices that particular Alliances had voted not to join in the boycott of the Mallory Steam Ship Line.[91] Occasional accounts of Alliances that were supporting the boycott were included.[92] In one case, that of the Bethany Alliance of Collin County, the membership voted not to boycott and also voted to request the News and the Citizen to print the decision.[93] A later account of a group which voted to join the boycott was also included, again at the request of the Alliance.[94]

The combination of political activity and affiliation with the Knights earned the farmers the enmity of the News. The expressed attitude was that the farmers would recognize that it was not in their best interest to support labor and eventually would return to support of local business and political interests. On March 12, 1886, a special to the News said rumors indicated the Alliance was in sympathy with the strikers and would join them in "political steps to control the State." The account said this was not unlikely, since the farmer had "been so accustomed to look upon corporations as his enemy that he will naturally join forces with any other enemy who comes in sight." The account predicted the Alliance would be of short duration because "the farmer's interests require speedy and

uninterrupted railway transporation."[95]

Most of the News's criticism was directed at the strikers, rather than at the farmers, and it began to print editorials on page one. News editors stated that the receiver of the Texas Railway took the "indisputable" position that the strikers who quit work and who had been paid were no longer company employees, and therefore had no right "not to allow others to do that work."[96] The News particularly emphasized that strikers should not be allowed to occupy the property that belonged to the company. They opposed "formal or informal treaties," saying that "Men must deal with men."[97]

The News included some comments of those who favored striking. Columns like "Voices From the Friends of Strikers" and "Some Points Pertaining to the Other Side" were included on page nine of the March 21, 1886, issue.[98] The language, however, was clear. Strikers represented the "Other Side." By this time, the strikers also were aware that they were not on the same side as the News, and the News printed the Knights resolution to "condemn the views and expressions of the DALLAS MORNING NEWS as aggressive and unfriendly to the labor movement, and an unjust attack on an organization they know nothing about." The Knights defined the News' brand of conservativism as a "means to put down any labor movement established," and as a way of endorsing corporations in their "unholy and unjust attempts" to crush labor's efforts to escape "slavery" and "aggression."[99]

Opposition grew stronger throughout 1886. In March the News reported a meeting of the Merchant's Exchange of Dallas, noting that the meeting was to be commended for its "lack of anything like violence." The fourth resolution, the News said, "set forth the sentiment very largely felt among conservative citizens of the state."[100]

The fourth resolution denounced

> "any attempt on the part of any man or set of men to interfere with the property rights of others, or to dictate to other men how they shall conduct their business, or to whom they shall sell, or from whom they shall buy, or to interfere with their freedom of action in the slightest degree, whether by open or secret violence, boycott or otherwise, as criminally unjust and subversive of every principle upon which free government and free institutions are founded, and we pledge ourselves to the maintenance of this sacred principle."[101]

The News continued,

> "The broad conservative spirit, that which fosters legitimate business interests, domestic tranquility and happiness, kind relations between employers and employed and protection of property and individual rights at any hazard, is the motive that should seize hold upon the people of this State in this hour of disorganized business and danger to property."[102]

The newspaper continued to emphasize that reports of Alliance support of the Knights were probably exaggerated, and that farmers, if they were involved, were being duped by political agitators.[103] The News predicted the railroads would recoup their losses from the farmers through increased costs for services. One writer asked whether the farmers would accept the situation philosophically "as just what he anticipated when he hurrahed for the Knights of Labor?"[104] The farmers were for the most part not to be controlled by "professional deadbeats and agitators," the News claimed, and would not want to combine simply for political purposes. "The farmer is, in fact, the employer and paymaster of the railway employe, [sic] and should ask himself if his employe's recent behavior has been friendly."[105]

The News also editorialized on page one about an effort of the Knights of Labor to organize cotton pickers. "Very soon," the editorial writer predicted, "the Farmers' Alliance may be called upon to sympathize with and support a strike of the cotton pickers." The News said, "Then, perhaps,

the Farmers' Alliance may see the beauty of unconsidered sympathy," and the association with the Knights would cause a "good deal of embarrassment to farmers."[106] The News said, however, that it was likely "that the report that the farmers are in sympathy with the present raid on interstate and State commerce is exaggerated, and put forth by some unofficial and over enthusiastic Knight of Labor."[107] By May, in the height of campaigning season, the News was concerned about the effect of "class interests and class prejudices" on the election of a candidate for governor.[108] The News cautioned that any considerable secession from the State convention by labor, prohibitionists and political farmer alliances "would be a formidable antagonist for the regular Democratic organization to combat. In dealing with these contests, in formulating the platform and in selecting candidates the convention has a task before it of much greater moment than the blind partisan appreciates."[109] In July the News spoke of farmer who does his "part well every time if he has a fair show and is not misled by the political worker."[110] A later editorial claimed that those who were organizing the Alliances and the Knights were the opponents of the Democratic Party.[111]

The News' opposition to activities of organized labor did not indicate necessarily that it assumed a position in favor of monopoly. The newspaper assumed a stance promoted by other editors writing in the South and the Midwest that "capital is being accumulated under laws that take advantage of the good nature of the American people. . capitalists who have thus profited must begin to see that their one-sided privileges. . . are not to be continued."[112] However, the News had been intimately connected with the railroads, and, as part of the newspaper's boom-town philosophy, urged them to build new lines in Texas. The newspaper also arranged for special trains to ship

newspapers to various parts of the state.[113]

On August 4, 1886, the News reporter attended the meeting of the Alliance at Cleburne, and described the farmers at the gathering as somewhat "grangey."[114] Such a description was far different from that of the News reporter who had viewed the ladies attired "a la mode" at Oak Lawn nearly a year earlier.[115] If the assumption on the part of the News was that farmers were economically depressed, the newspaper was correct. But it would be difficult to assume that in less than twelve months the farmers' economic situation had dropped significantly enough to account for the reporters' disparate perceptions.

The Jacksboro Rural Citizen and The Dallas Morning News represented two styles of journalism and two points of view in a society under political and social tension. The newspapers represented different styles of business enterprise, they served different audiences, and they defined news and the public interest from different perspectives. By the end of 1886, however, they reached similar conclusions--that the Farmers' Alliance should remain a non-political body and that it should not affiliate with striking laborers. Despite that similarity the two newspapers assigned different levels of legitimacy to agrarian activists, the Rural Citizen viewing labor affiliation and political action as detrimental to the Alliance organization itself, and the News labeling the farmers as politically naive and ineffectual.

The efforts of J.N. Rogers to follow modern journalistic tenets indicated he valued his role as a journalist and did not promote merely a party line. He separated advertising from news content, attempted to obtain national news, upgraded the technical quality of his newspaper and

maintained his claim to freedom of opinion separate from party dictates. However, his newspaper did not represent an institutionalized business endeavor. He never attempted to achieve mass circulation to a mass audience, and he had neither the technology nor the resources which would have enabled him to cover state and national news and attract national advertising. Instead, his audience was local and poor, and the newspaper labored to achieve exchanges of information within that audience.

Rogers defined the news function in terms of printing basic announcements about Alliance activities and in terms of communication among members of the Alliance. He stressed unity, cooperation and personal and social growth among the members of his audience, and he encouraged individual farmers and family members to express their views in his newspaper. Such an attitude enhanced the image of his subscribers and of the farmers' movement. He depicted farmers as serious, intelligent and motivated individuals who were struggling to secure their economic position in a changing world.

The Dallas Morning News was a developing business institution. An outgrowth of the state's oldest daily, the News marshaled extensive resources to cover national and state news. Its plant was modern and its circulation constantly growing. Access to national advertising, United Press wire services, and Dallas business support enabled it to increase its size and gain access to prominent officials in the state, who became authoritative sources in the news columns.

The audience of the News was town-oriented. The newspaper promoted the development of railway transportation, increased manufacturing and a state fair. Because the News was a business institution in a booming business economy, it adopted a business philosophy.

Early in the newspaper's life, the editors defined the farmers in the

same business group as it defined the residents of Dallas and itself. But as the farmers began to assert political strength and to challenge the existing economic structure, the newspaper's description of the farmers changed. Thus the prosperous farmers who met at Oak Lawn became the "grangey" farmers who met at Cleburne. Words like "miscellaneousness" and "leopardian" crept into descriptions of the farmers' politics, and their organization was defined as a "dark-lantern political body." They were presented as naive individuals who did not act in their own best interest, but who acted spontaneously out of particular grievances.

The Jacksboro Rural Citizen and the Dallas Morning News therefore assumed different functions, addressed themselves to different audiences, and assigned varying levels of legitimacy to the farmers' actions. Because the News had greater resources than the Rural Citizen and a larger audience, it in this sense helped to promote a conservative business ideology which labeled farmers and laborers as troublemakers within an otherwise well-ordered society.

One must be careful, however, in generalizing the roles of the two newspapers to the press at large. The Rural Citizen may well not be representative of the Alliance press. It was the first official Alliance organ and had a professional journalist as its editor. It represented struggling days within the Alliance organization, a time of conflict and solidification of the role the Alliance would play. It is quite possible that as the organization developed, the tolerance for genuine debate subsided, the sense of community as an ideal diminished and the function of the newspapers was re-evaluated. Similarly, the Dallas News represents only one newspaper in one developing community.

ENDNOTES

[1] Dallas Morning News, 18 October 1885. (Hereafter referred to as News.

[2] News, 8 August 1886.

[3] Jacksboro Rural Citizen, 30 July 1885. (Hereafter referred to as Rural Citizen.)

[4] Lawrence Goodwyn, Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 79.

[5] Goodwyn, p. 33.

[6] Norman Pollack in The Populist Response to Industrial America: Midwestern Populist Thought (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962) argues effectively for Populism as a class movement, with a broad base including intellectuals and urban labor. For a thorough description of Populist disaffection with the political system see Pollack's The Populist Mind (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1967). For comments on the return of prosperity and the decline of Populism, see John Hicks, The Populist Revolt (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1931) and Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955). For efforts on the part of the corporate power structure to thwart Populist efforts, see Lawrence Goodwyn, The Populist Moment (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). Other sources on Populism include Bruce Palmer's "Man Over Money:" The Southern Populist Critique of American Capitalism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980; and Stanley Parson's The Populist Context: Rural Versus Urban

Power on a Great Plains Frontier (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1973).

[7] Goodwyn, p. 608.

[8] Sam Acheson, 35,000 Days in Texas: A History of the Dallas News and Its Forbears (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938), pp. 98-108. This account of the Dallas Morning News is an obviously biased account, and the source should be used only for information in regard to dates, etc.)

[9] For a social history of American journalism see Michael Schudson, Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978). The general view is that from 1830-1900 the newspaper was "democratized" and had a "democratizing influence," and that it expanded from serving an elite audience to serving a mass audience. Although Schudson acknowledges the development of an urban middle class and its relationship to journalism, he does not develop a theory about exclusion of other groups. See pp. 30-31.

[10] Edwin and Michael Emery, The Press and America, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), p. 206.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Jean Lange Kennedy (Folkerts), "William Allen White: The Interrelationship of Press, Power and Party Politics," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1981, p. 2.

[13] R. Miliband, The State in Capitalist Society (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 224.

[14] Pamela J. Shoemaker, "Political Deviance, The Media and Legitimacy," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1982, pp. 33-34.

[15] Joseph P. McKerns, "The Limits of Progressive Journalism History," Journalism History 4:3 (1977): 88.

[16] McKerns, p. 91.

[17] Marion Marzolf, "American Studies--Ideas for Media Historians?" Journalism History 5:1 (1978): 14.

[18] John D. Stevens and Hazel Dicken Garcia, Communication History (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980), p. 67.

[19] Jacksboro Gazette, 1 July 1886.

[20] Rural Citizen, 18 February 1881.

[21] Rural Citizen, 26 January 1882.

[22] Rural Citizen, 13 October 1881.

[23] For principles of the Greenback Party see Rural Citizen, 17 November 1881; for Knights of Labor Constitution see Rural Citizen, 15 October 1885; for Democratic and Republican parties see Rural Citizen, 17 September 1880.

[24] Rural Citizen, 8 October 1885.

[25] Rural Citizen, 13 October 1881.

[26] Rural Citizen, 1881-1885.

[27] Rural Citizen, 13 October 1881.

[28] Ibid.

[28] Rural Citizen, 17 March 1881.

[29] For comments on buying at home, see Rural Citizen, 27 October 1881.

[30] Linda Steiner, "The Importance of Early Suffrage Papers in Creating a Community," unpublished paper presented to Qualitative Division, Association for Education in Journalism, August 1981. For analysis of the newspaper's role in the development of an identity for

the American Indian see James E. and Sharon M. Murphy, Let My People Know (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981).

[31] Steiner, p. 2.

[32] Rural Citizen, 3 April 1884.

[33] See page four in most issues of Rural Citizen. See also 3 April 1884 for comments from members wanting to hear from other members.

[34] Rural Citizen, 10 February 1881; 10 April 1884; 30 July 1885.

[35] Rural Citizen, 17 March 1881; 28 June 1883; 19 July 1883.

[36] Rural Citizen, 28 June 1883

[37] Rural Citizen, 19 July 1883.

[38] Rural Citizen, 10 February 1881.

[39] Rural Citizen, 31 January 1884.

[40] Rural Citizen, 21 February 1884.

[41] Rural Citizen, 10 April 1884; 24 April 1884.

[42] Rural Citizen, 29 October 1885.

[43] Rural Citizen, 24 April 1884; 13 August 1885; 20 August 1885; 27 August 1885; 1 October 1885.

[44] Rural Citizen, 13 August 1885.

[45] Rural Citizen, 27 August 1885.

[46] Rural Citizen, 4 February 1886.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Rural Citizen, 18 March 1886.

[49] See Dallas News and Rural Citizen, December 1885 to March 1886. See also Goodwyn, pp. 60-66.

[50] Rural Citizen, 18 March 1886.

[51] Rural Citizen, week of 11 March 1886.

[52] Rural Citizen, 1 April 1886.

53 Rural Citizen, 22 April 1886.

54 Ibid.

55 Rural Citizen, 22-26 April 1886.

56 Jacksboro Gazette, 12 August 1886.

57 Rural Citizen, 7 January 1886.

58 Ibid.

59 Rural Citizen, 11 February 1886.

60 Acheson, p. 96.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Acheson, p. 99.

66 Acheson, pp. 101-103.

67 Texas Almanac, (Dallas, Tex: A.H. Belo Corp.: 1982) p.

68 News, 1 October 1885, quoted in Acheson, p. 106.

69 News, 20 March 1886.

70 News, 1 October 1885, quoted in Acheson, p. 106.

71 Ibid.

72 News, 20 March 1886.

73 Ibid.

74 News, 3 October 1885.

75 News, 6 October 1885.

76 News, 7, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 23 and 31 October, 1885.

77 News, 9 October, 1885.

78 News, 10 October, 1885.

79 News, 15 October, 1885.

[80] News, 20 January 1886.

[81] News, 18 October 1885.

[82] Goodwyn, p. 63.

[83] News, 23 October 1885.

[84] News, 2 November 1885.

[85] News, 6 November 1885.

[86] News, 13 January 1886.

[87] Ibid.

[88] News, 12 March 1886; 27 April, 1886.

[89] News, 22 February 1886.

[90] News, 22 February 1886.

[91] News, 10 March 1886; 25 March 1886.

[92] News, 3 March 1886.

[93] News, 10 March 1886.

[94] News, 3 March 1886.

[95] News, 12 March 1886.

[96] News, 12 March 1886.

[97] Ibid.

[98] News, 21 March 1886.

[99] News, 22 March 1886.

[100] News, 18 March 1886.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

[103] News, 28 March 1886.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] News, 6 April 1886.

[107] Ibid.

[108] News, 18 May 1886.

[109] News, 1 July 1886.

[110] News, 21 July 1886.

[111] News, 27 April 1886.

[112] News, 16 April 1886.

[113] Acheson, p. 110.

[114] News, 4 August 1886.

[115] News, 18 October 1885.